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RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND RELATED INTOLERANCE

Written statement submitted by the Coordinating Board of Jewish Organizations, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[24 March 1998]

GE.98-11564 (E)

1. Last year the United Nations Commission on Human Rights voted to delete a line dealing with anti-Semitism from the report of Mr. Maurice Glélé-Ahanhanzo, Special Rapporteur on racism, xenophobia and related intolerance. In a written submission to the Commission, a body of human rights NGOs have formally objected to this censorship of an independent expert.

2. The Commission acted at the time because the representatives of some States asserted that the deleted line, which referred to the misuse of the Qur'an to promote racial or religious hatred, was an affront to Islam. The logic of this assertion and of the subsequent vote appears to be that if anyone abuses a holy source to promote bigotry against a segment of the population with different religious beliefs, it is not the perpetrator who is at fault but rather the person who points out what is happening. We find this a most peculiar and dangerous approach to the promotion and protection of human rights.

3. The Coordinating Board of Jewish Organizations would like to submit that it is not the deleted line which is an affront to Islam, but rather the activity which it described, an activity that is alien to the spirit of tolerance associated with the world's major religions and especially, during the "Golden Age", with Islam. Furthermore, it considers that the deletion of the line cannot erase the fact that Islamic sources have indeed been misused. The evidence comes from the same source that was quoted by the Special Rapporteur - the report on anti-Semitism in 1996 prepared by Tel Aviv University.

4. According to this university study, promoting hatred of Jews is used by those in the Islamic world who reject the peace process and are anxious to foster opposition to the normalization of relations with Israel. For example, according to one Islamic fundamentalist, Jews are depicted in the Qur'an as "rancorous, aggressive and dishonest" (*al-Sha'b*, 11 June 1996). They "do not respect agreements and cannot be trusted because they betrayed the Prophet" (*al-Wafd*, 11 October 1996).

5. Another author, in a series of articles which appeared in the weekly *al-Liwa* between March and September 1996, dealt with Qur'anic verses on the Jews and with Jewish themes from the time of the Prophet until the present. According to the university study, "Jews were depicted throughout the series as despicable, cowards when weak and oppressors when powerful. They disseminated myths and fallacies among the Arabs and therefore were to be hated and found distasteful, and should be destroyed by God's will." This was followed by actual incitement to genocide: "The Muslim *umma* should be aware of the Jewish danger since it was her divine duty to rid the world of this danger."

6. Clearly, in the limited space available all of the examples from the university study cannot be quoted, but the Coordinating Board of Jewish Organizations believes that it has provided the members of the Commission with a representative sampling which proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that the

problem referred to in the report of the Special Rapporteur is, in fact, real and poses a serious challenge to human rights advocates, to the human rights offices and mechanisms of the United Nations, and to the Commission itself. Deleting reference to it only diminishes the credibility of the Commission. It will not make the problem go away. The Special Rapporteur has correctly pointed to the problem. It is up to the Commission to take appropriate action.